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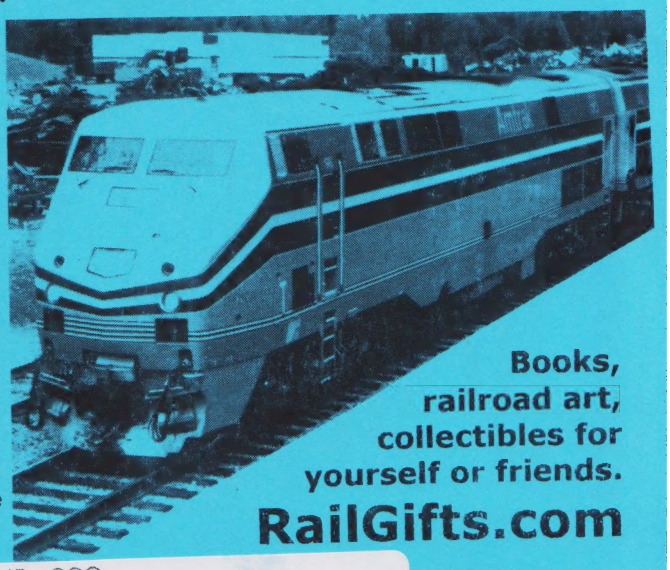

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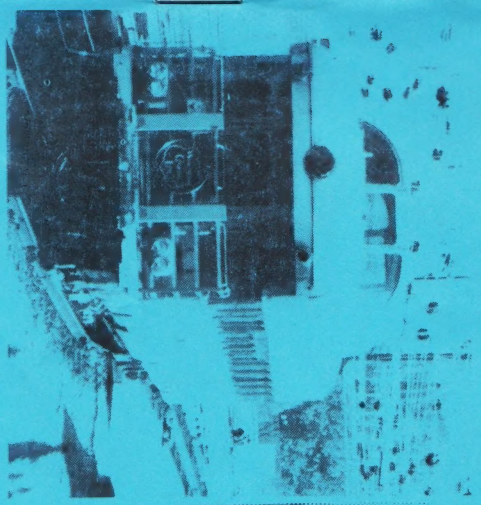

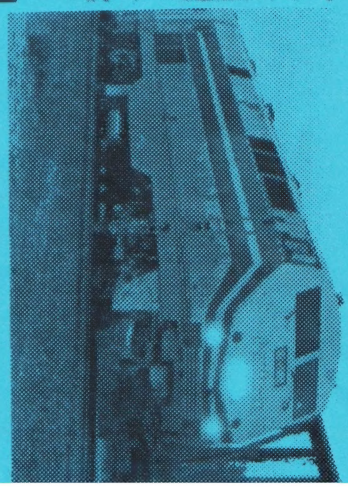

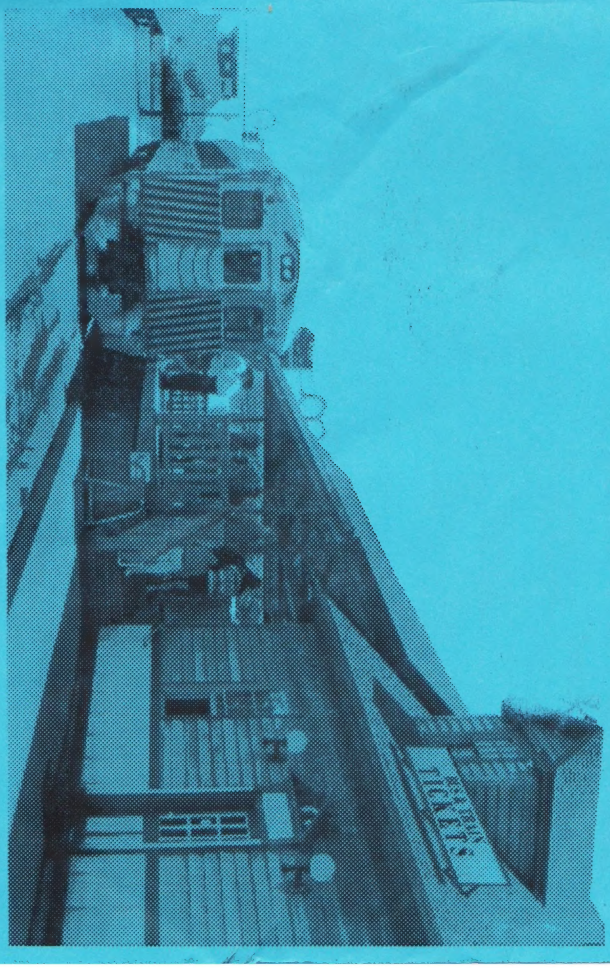

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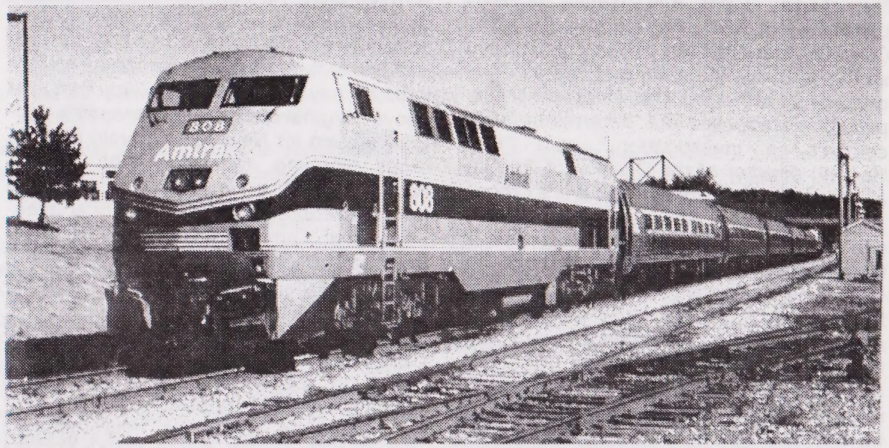

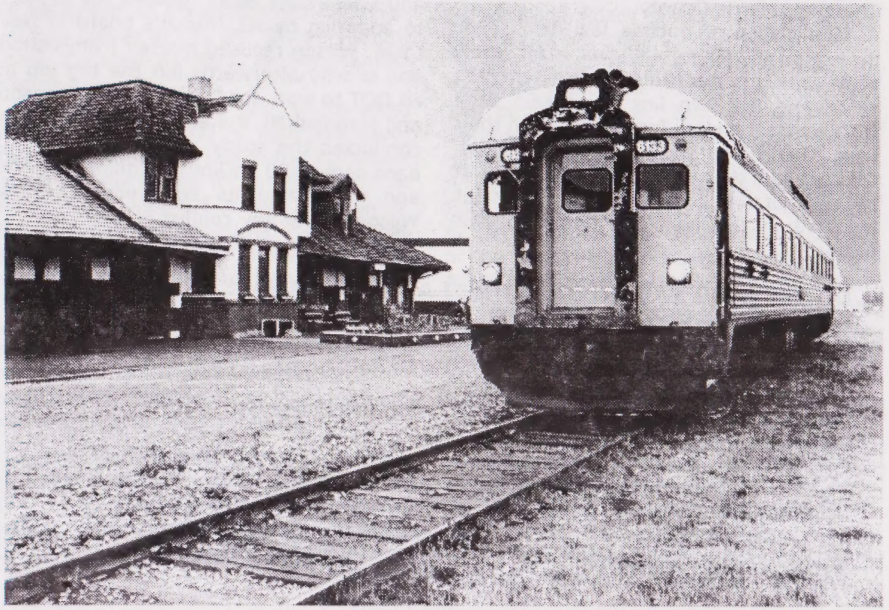

ON THE COVER

Top: The *Downeaster*, Amtrak train 683, at Portland, Maine on Aug 25, 2002. In this issue, Miles Post rides the *Downeaster* and then gets into some of the more obscure passenger trains of Eastern Canada. Photo by Miles Post.

Bottom: The VIA Rail Canada Vancouver Island Budd-Car train on the ex-E&N Railway, between Victoria and Courtenay, makes a stop of several minutes at the Nanaimo BC station to change crews. In this issue, Gene Poon rides this threatened train. Photo by Gene Poon.

EAST COAST REPORT

New Jersey's Attorney General's office quietly launched in late Nov an investigation of the Southern New Jersey Light Rail Transit project, currently under construction between Camden and Trenton with a scheduled spring 2003 opening date. "Very serious questions raised by the Dept of Transportation compelled our determination to conduct an investigation," said Peter Harvey, director of the Division of Criminal Justice in the Attorney General's office.

The Attorney General has appointed two outside law firms with expertise in fraud detection to examine the light rail line as well as the E-Z Pass automated toll collection system in use on New Jersey's three major toll highways. Any evidence found of wrongdoing will be reported to the Division of Criminal Justice, said state officials and the attorneys involved in the investigation. The two outside law firms are located in New York City and in Chatham, Morris County.

The choice of outside law firms over the Attorney General's own staff drew some criticism, but the Attorney General's office and the two law firms said they were doing the work for far less than their usual hourly rates for private clients. Officials said that investigators will look at the gamut of contracts and decisions involved in the light rail and E-Z Pass projects.

The administration of Gov. Christine Todd Whitman chose the Camden-Trenton route in late 1996 after local opposition stymied plans for light rail on other South Jersey corridors with higher ridership potential. The state decided to fund the project itself, though it was forced to go into debt to pay the near-$1 billion cost, far above original estimates. Foregoing federal funding let New Jersey avoid the rigorous planning and application process required by the Federal Transportation Administration, but brought critical allegations that Camden-Trenton did not meet the ridership criteria for federal funding.

The feasibility study took less than 45 days, versus decades of studies by various agencies for other corridors such as Camden-Mount Holly and Camden-Glassboro. On the basis of this study, the Transportation Commissioner Frank Wilson, who had previously held management positions at Philadelphia's SEPTA and California's BART, guided the project to approval by NJ Transit's board in Nov 1996. Wilson recused himself from voting and shortly afterwards left the top job at NJ DOT to work for Daniel, Mann, Johnson and Mendenhall, the engineering firm that conducted the study and has gone on to earn some $70 million designing the line and overseeing its construction. Frank Wilson denies any conflict of interest.

It will be up to the New Jersey Attorney General's office to issue subpoenas if they are needed for its investigation.

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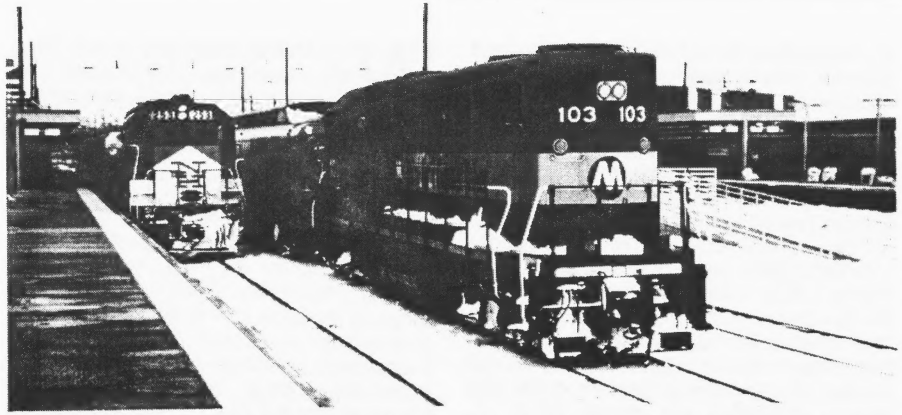


A photo taken at New Haven CT on Jan 10, 1996, showing Shore Line East train 253 with three Bombardier cars working for Metro-North. At right is work engine 103 with a set of dead M2s. Snowstorm Ginger's fine snow was sucked in and shorted out many traction motors on the M2 electrics. Shore Line East equipment ran as far west as Harrison NY, helping Metro-North. Photo by Bob Underwood.

Two diesel-powered light rail cars have been received by NJ Transit and the Bechtel-led consortium working the Camden-Trenton line. Test runs were to begin the week of Thanksgiving on the street-running portion of tracks in Camden to test clearances and signal systems. The cars are to run between the Walter Rand Transportation Center on Broadway and the Tweeter Center concert hall on the Delaware River waterfront. A total of 24 cars are being built by Bombardier, and will be based at a maintenance and dispatching center at the 36th Street station, where Camden borders on Pennsauken Township.

The Delaware Valley ARP, which withheld support from NJT's light rail plan, favoring a lower-cost commuter rail alternative, is now calling for integrated fares and transfers with NJT buses, the Atlantic City rail line, and especially PATCO's Hi-Speed Line. DVARP also urges alternative bus or FRA-compatible rail service in late-evening hours to carry riders after the slated 9pm shutdown to make way for freight operations. DVARP also supports the 1.3-mile extension to the state capital complex in Trenton, now undergoing environmental and other reviews.

SEPTA has begun a catenary reconstruction project between Suburban and 30th Street stations on its Regional Rail division, a 4-track, 0.9-mile stretch used by every SEPTA commuter train.

The project began Nov 2 and will last 22 weekends over seven months, skipping heavily-traveled holiday weekends Nov 30-Dec 29 and the first two weekends of Mar 2003. Work is expected to end in late June. No trains can operate between Suburban and 30th Street, so shuttle buses are pressed into service between Market East, Suburban and 30th Street stations. Trains from the former PRR lines are turned at the upper level of 30th Street station, while trains from the ex-Reading Railroad lines operate as far as Suburban station to turn. SEPTA tells its weekend riders to allow up to 25mins for the bus transfers.

The Airport rail line is being bused in its entirety and charges full railroad fares. The bus routing is: Eastwick station in Southwest Philadelphia, all airport terminals at the street-level baggage claim and arrivals, then via expressways to Market East, Suburban, 30th Street and University City stations. It is virtually the opposite of the airport trains' Market East-Suburban-30th Street-University City-Eastwick-Airport routing. Because of the route differences, travel time by bus is actually shorter between the airport and Market East station, but increased from 10 to 49 minutes between Eastwick and University City—James Thornton.

The eighth annual Candy Cane Express was run from New Haven CT to South Norwalk and return on Sunday, Dec 8. On board the train, children undergo-

ing treatment for childhood cancer and chronic blood disorders were given holiday treats and visits with Santa Claus and his helpers. The children were accompanied by their parents and siblings for the approximate 2-hour ride. Carol singing inside the beautifully decorated Union Station preceded the trip.

The consist of the train was: Shore Line East/CDOT GP40s 6694 & 6699; cars (SPVs) 1627, 1633, cab car 1673, 1623, 1625, cab car 1675, lounge-cab car 1001. The weather was partly cloudy with temperatures in the low 40s. The sun was still shining at the 2pm departure time, but shortly thereafter the clouds rolled in. There was lots of snow on the ground left over from a good snow the previous Thursday.

On Dec 24 I rode Shore Line East early getaway train 3626 from New Haven to Old Saybrook CT. This train runs Fridays during the summer, but then runs only the days before Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. I've never ridden it on any of these pre-holidays before, and I was delighted to see that we left New Haven with a good 100 passengers! Never before have I seen this many on this train.

At Old Saybrook we arrived at the new Track 2 hi-level platform. The new platform is maybe 3.5 cars long. I imagine that long Amtrak trains double the stop fro coach and business class passengers.

Train 3675 returned to New Haven with a "crowd of three" and arrived in ample time for one passenger to make a transfer to a Metro-North train.

Speaking of Metro-North, the railroad issued very attractive Christmas/New Year's timetables that show plenty of extra holidays trains for both days, as well as all-night New Year's morning train service returning from Grand Central. And notice the great ad for group travel on M-N, with a streamlined steam engine! Well, we can dream, can't we?—Bob Underwood.

With Amtrak declining to bid for a new contract, MBTA will be operated by the consortium Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad, announced as the successful bidder and taking over on July 1. It is composed of Connex, Bombardier and a Boston transportation consulting firm. Connex is a French company that currently holds a British franchise for the old Southern Railway's Southeast Coast operations that runs out in 2004 and is being forced out. It is similar to another franchiser there, Stagecoach Holdings, in that the two of them have been buying up US and Canadian private bus companies. Connex how holds my local service here in Monmouth County NJ, where NJ Transit supplies the buses and Connex provides the services. Stagecoach owns Coach USA and Coach Canada, among others.

Railworld LLC has won the bidding for the bankrupt Bangor & Aroostook and will begin the operation of the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway in early 2003. They also bought all the Amtrak long-term leased F40 engines, except for the two at CSX, which were swapped for three diesel switchers currently operating on the NE Corridor. In the deal they take over the New Brunswick Southern Rwy and the Quebec Southern Rwy in Canada, as well as the Eastern Maine Rwy and Canadian American Rwy (CDAC) in the US. The Northern Vermont Rwy between Newport and Wells River VT will be abandoned unless the state takes it over. This gives them an end-to-end line from St. John NB to St. Jean QC of 454.8 miles and trackage rights on another 26.9 miles on Canadian Pacific Rwy from St. Jean to St. Luc Yard in Montreal. They will start with 19 GP35u's--#500-518 plus CDAD's ex-Amtrak F40M-2Fs, currently 11 in service with more to come. Three ex-Amtrak F40s--#243-287 and 411—were reported in transit on Canadian National Rwy freight #216 out of Toronto and en route to Alstom-Montreal on Nov 8. They come from a pool that was stored temporarily at EJ&E's Joliet yard (no room at Beech Grove) also owned by Railworld. There is no word on passenger service, but the route to St. John is the former route of VIA/CPR *Atlantic Limited*.

We have had a few more resignations at Amtrak. Two Regional General Managers: Bill Duggun, the Western General Manager, resigned effective Dec 6 to take a position with NJ Transit, joining Mr. Warrington's staff. Then Lynn Bowersox resigned as Eastern General Manager. No replacements have been named and the Division General Superintendents will now report directly to Ed Walker, VP of Operations. Then it was announced that Bill Crosbie was hired as a VP of Operations. Can there be two? We'll have to wait and see. His background was originally with CPR and then TTC Toronto from 1998 to 2001—a Canadian invasion? I am sure he worked for Mr. Gunn somewhere in his Canadian days! It's going to be interesting.—James Langan.

●●●

A 3-DAY THANKSGIVING TRIP
By James Langan

Although the weather was bad—from sun to rain and again sun by arrival, which was on-time in Washington—it was a good trip down. We even had to wait in Philadelphia, for a following *Acela Express* to leave ahead of us, as it's mostly double track only until you get by Havre de Grace MD, then much triple from there to Baltimore.

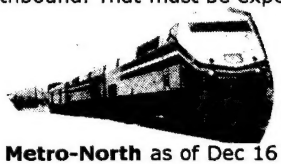
I was lucky to get a seat on the right side for viewing Race Street yard in Philadelphia. However, there was only one coach in the yard, along with the two *Acela Expresses* and an HHP-8, that I believe is a MARC unit. It was too far away to tell. I haven't seen a MARC unit in service since they were all delivered—in fact, most Penn line sets are diesel push-pull. They may have yaw-damper problems too.

Our train was completely full from Metropark to Baltimore, with some passengers sitting in the dinette. The conductors asked everyone to bring their food back to their seats until seats became available later.

Saturday's trip wasn't so full, but our business-class car was full out of Philadelphia. Wilmington Shop had only four E60s outside the shop; they need only six for service, and all 11 are operable since no. 606 returned to service after major repairs. It's tough collecting consist info at Corridor speeds, and on my return trip I couldn't walk fast enough to catch the AEM-7 locomotive number, as it was unload and go at Newark.

I did get my first ride on NJ Transit's new Comet Vs on the way home. It was in push mode with an ALP-44. NJT is having computer problems with the new ALP-46s and they are still being worked out. One Trenton train had a 44 on the front and a 46 on the rear. There was some one in the cab of the 46, possibly a manufacturer's engineer working on the problems.

The new Alstom coaches ride much better than the previous Bombardier coaches. One thing that really surprised me as we were arriving at Newark Airport Station was seeing an Amtrak AEM-7 leading two private varnish cars only, southbound. That must be expensive!



Metro-North as of Dec 16 had a year to date on-time perf record of 97.3%. Their goal for the year was 97.2%.

The *Downeaster* reached its first anniversary, and Amtrak celebrated it on Sat, Dec 14. Amtrak board member and former Mass. Gov. Michael Dukakis was the top VIP at the event, accompanied by Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority executive director John Englert and members of the US Marine Corps. Boston's North Station was the site of the celebration at 4:30pm, with train 684 scheduled to arrive at 4:45. Eight Marines collected donations for the "Toys for Tots" campaign and 120 prizes of a free round-trip on the *Downeaster* were awarded.

In its first year, the train recorded ridership nearly 23,000 below its initial projections. However, there were more longer trips than expected, so that total revenues, of $4.6 million, were actually $1.3 million over projections. On-time perf was highly satisfactory.

Washington Metro General Manager Richard White at year-end said that the agency needs a fare increase in 2003 to partially offset a large projected budget deficit. It's been eight years since fares were raised. Expansion plans may have to be cut back.

On Dec 19 Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board voted support for a $3.14 billion Metro subway extension to Tysons Corner, Dulles Airport and beyond.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"This week's rumor that some Senate appropriations committee members want to cut back Amtrak's appropriation from $1.2 billion to $762 million should be met with outrage – and phone calls, editorials and letters to the editors.

"The national transportation system is under enough stress as it is without disabling the passenger rail network, including the Northeast Corridor, which such an action would do. Amtrak's President David Gunn has already stated that he will shut down the system if Congress continues with this game of financial brinkmanship, and most of us who know David believe what he says.

"To those members of the news media who read *Destination:Freedom*, some explanation: Budgets may be tight, but Amtrak has been on starvation wages for its entire existence. From 1997-2002, for example it was authorized at $1 billion a year, yet often received half of that. No wonder it is in a hole. People who think we can just kill the long distance trains and keep running the Northeast Corridor (which carries about half Amtrak's customers) are badly mistaken: the NEC is $6 billion in arrears on infrastructure and maintenance, and has always required more support, not less, than the long distance strains, which operate over the tracks of the freight railroads. The NEC has never gotten it, and now is in rough shape.

"We have got to get over the knee-jerk ideological urge to punish Amtrak because it requires a subsidy. The airline and highway systems have always required a far greater subsidy, yet no one threatens to cut the funding for those modes by 50 per cent, or anything approaching that ludicrous amount. Indeed, while the airlines have soaked up subsidies for years, lately they have been eating tax dollars at a prodigious rate.

"Time to act (once again) and call the Senate Appropriations Committee 202-224-3471. Speak now, or forever regret it."

—James RePass, President & CEO of the National Corridors Iniative, in Website editorial, Jan 13.

WEST COAST REPORT

The Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission in Dec officially began its 511 traveler information service to provide on-demand information by telephone on public transit, traffic, carpooling, vanpooling and bicycling in the Bay Area.

MTC said the new number is easier to remember than the previous 817-1717 and parallels the existing 411 and 911 numbers. The service uses voice recognition rather than touch dialing.

Early in 2003 the MTC will also have a Web site--www.511.org—to serve as a portal to this and other services.

Metrolink commuter train struck a pickup truck at a crossing in Burbank CA Jan 6, derailing the train and putting two cars on their sides. The pickup driver was killed and 32 of the 58 passengers and crew on the train were injured, four seriously. The truck exploded in a fireball, but fire fighters quickly extinguished the fire. The train was running in push mode with a cab car leading. The truck driver evidently drove around lowered crossing gates and onto the tracks. Crossing lights were also reportedly operating.

BART's extension to the San Francisco airport had its opening delayed again. Now the earliest date seems to be about 10 weeks beyond the end of Jan. Although the project is 98% complete, a number of small delays have reportedly added up to a more major delay in opening. The original projected date had been in Dec 2001.

***Pacific Surfliner* service** suffers disruption on the following dates: Jan 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 31 and Feb 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9 because Metrolink is performing a tie replacement project those days. Trains 589, 591, 593 & 597 will use buses San Diego-Irvine, and trains 588, 590, 592 & 796 will use buses Irvine-San Diego.

San Francisco Muni proposes to raise fares 25% Sep 1. If approved, the rise would be the first for in 11 years. The San Francisco Chronicle editorialized in favor of the increase, which is needed to help cover a projected $38 million deficit.

Mudslides between Seattle and Everett WA closed the BNSF line early in the week of Jan 5, causing the *Empire Builder* to terminate at Everett once or twice.

Two separate incidents of men being killed while walking or standing on the tracks on Jan 8 spooked Caltrain officials. One, in Redwood City, seemed obviously a suicide. The other man, in San Francisco, failed to respond to the horn of the train behind him as he walked. Caltrain trespasser fatalities have dropped each year recently, from 17 in 2000 to 5 in 2002, after safety efforts were increased.

The debut of the AirTrain automated people mover at the San Francisco airport may be delayed from its expected late-Jan date because of a transformer blow-out on Jan 8. Last Aug 4 a crash that destroyed three cars caused a setback of the Bombardier-built system.

The Capitol Corridor is beginning an experiment to run Jan 13-Feb 6: train 538 Oakland-Sacramento will have massage therapists aboard Mon-Thur to offer neck and shoulder massages for $1 per minute, using special massage chairs on the lower car level. The trial program may continue beyond Feb 6 if successful.

Caltrans was ordered by a state commission Dec 12 to freeze all new spending on transportation projects and repairs until Feb. Projects placed in jeopardy include $4.7 million in Oakland to San Jose Capitol Corridor track improvements and improvements to the Emeryville Amtrak station. Money for new transit service reportedly will run out before June 2003.

Southern California rail projects also in jeopardy are the $351 million Oceanside to Escondido rail line; $43 million second-tracking for the *Pacific Surfliner* and a San Diego County maintenance yard in National City; and the Oceanside to San Diego ferry.

Rehabilitation of the old brick SP depot in Stockton CA began in early Dec. The Altamont Commuter Express, which uses the station, wants to restore it to its original glory.

There are plans to build a new train station in Madera CA, on the *San Joaquin* line, but these came before the state budget problems were enunciated.

The Union Pacific has refused to consider a request by Amtrak to study the feasibility of an extension of a *San Joaquin* train overnight between Bakersfield and Los Angeles.

Coupled with a blizzard that closed highways between Sacramento and Reno, a UP freight derailment at Blue Canyon in the Sierra blocked the *California Zephyr* on Dec 31. The Emeryville-bound train was halted near Reno and passengers placed in hotels overnight.

22 Capitol Corridor trains are now operating daily, and 19 on weekends. On Jan 6 the service inaugurated another weekday round trip between Sacramento, Oakland and San Jose. The new early-morning southbound train reaches San Jose at 7:45am. Train 525, which hits San Jose at 9:35am, is cut back to Oakland, with a connecting bus to San Jose.

California's budget problems due to current economic conditions have become acute, and Gov. Davis plans to cut many billions from the state budget. This will undoubtedly impact negatively rail service in the state. Davis is talking of asking for a sales tax increase. The situation could be unfavorable for passage in Nov 2003 of a critical ballot item regarding the planned Southern to Northern CA high-speed rail service.

MIDWEST REPORT

Amtrak returned to Kansas City MO Union Station Dec 10. The departure of the *Ann Rutledge* for Chicago at 7:35am was the first train departure from the historic station since 1985. The *Missouri Mule* and *Southwest Chief* also serve the station. A dedication was held Dec 17.

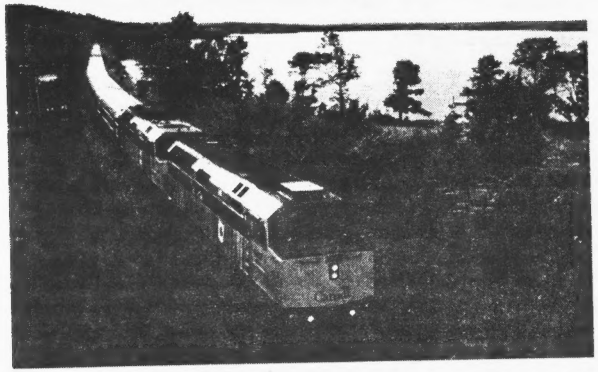
***Kentucky Cardinal* discontinuance** notices were sent Jan 6. Projected express business for the train did not materialize. The train's last run should be about July 9.

An excursion train of the Whitewater Valley RR, running each weekend before Christmas, had two cars overturn at Connersville IN Dec 7, injuring 10 people of about 500 aboard. The train excursion was to historic Metamora IN for shopping.

Joseph D. Konopka, 26, of Green Bay WI on Dec 20 pleaded guilty to attempting to wreck energy facilities. Known to the public as "Dr. Chaos", the man in Nov was found guilty of attempting to use cyanide in a Chicago CTA Blue Line tunnel, and received 14yrs in prison.

State of Montana was told by Amtrak in late Dec that it would not be asked to help pay for *Empire Builder* operations under a plan to obtain more state funding for Amtrak national network trains, as only those states in which Amtrak runs "commuter service" will be assessed.

RAIL CANADA



VIA Rail Canada train 15, the westbound *Ocean*, runs along the shore of Shubenacadie Lake near Sandy Cove, Nova Scotia, on August 29, 2002. Photo by Miles Post.

VIA Rail Canada has pushed back the Oct 27, 2002 startup of *Enterprise* service Toronto-Ottawa to mid-2003. They have received two more sets of ex-British Nightstar cars, out of a planned seven for Quebec-Windsor corridor services. They were deadheaded Oct 15 from Toronto to Montreal for training, etc., and a baggage car will be added to each set before they enter service. The movement included coaches 7218 & 7207, service car 7302, and bistro/club cars 7101 and 7100. The other set was 7219, 7211, 7305, and two bistro/clubs. They were to replace or supplement LRC services. Later, two more sets were released, to make a total of seven. The one released Nov 14 included coaches 7220 and 7221, service car 7301 and bistro/clubs 7106 and 7107. The next set had the first new baggage car, 7002, coaches 7209 and 7224, service car 7301 and bistro/clubs 7108 and 7109. Three sets went into service on the Ottawa-Montreal and Montreal-Quebec corridor Nov 25, Dec 8 and Dec 13. The baggage portion of the service cars is not that large, but sufficient for the *Enterprise* sets, since most sleeper passengers stow their bags in their rooms. Also, it's possible that a standard coupler could be fitted to the outer end, allowing any F40 or P42 to haul them.

The CEO of CNR, Paul Tellier, is taking over Bombardier's CEO job, which should straighten out that company's major problems in Europe and North America fairly soon. With legal suits in the rail and aircraft industry, they needed someone of his caliber.

Two Canadian Pacific Holiday trains ran again this year, to raise funds for food banks in the US and Canada. They were all dressed up in Christmas lights. The US train started from Steamtown Dec 3, in my hometown of Scranton PA, stopping in PA, NY, MI, IN, IL, WI and MN, while the Canadian train started from Toronto, running to Quebec, the Ottawa Valley, Windsor, and then over their route through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, ending up at Vancouver's Port Coquitlam BC station—their old station, now used as as the West Coast Express commuter terminal.—James Langan.

Montreal-St. Albans VT Amtrak Thruway bus connection for the *Vermonter*, which was to be dropped after the Jan 6 trips, was restored to the reservation system through Feb 5. The bus line, Vermont Transit, and Amtrak will be working to find a permanent solution.

City of Victoria, BC is looking at the possibility of a light rail system connecting the city of its Western Communities. A comprehensive study released in late Nov was encouraging, and is backed by the city of Victoria, the federal government and business interests. One end of the route would be in Langford, and it would run through Colwood, following the "Galloping Goose Trail" through downtown Victoria to James Bay.

Montreal-Boston passenger train service via New Hampshire and Vermont is feasible, concludes a study released in Nov. No definite funding sources have been identified. Stations under one plan would be Boston, Woburn, Manchester, Concord, White River Junction, Montpelier, Burlington and Montreal.

A BC BC Adventure: Part 2 – Conclusion

Riding VIA on Vancouver Island By Gene Poon

At the beginning of its Vancouver Island run, the VIA Rail Budd car waits alongside the Victoria BC station. Photos by the author.

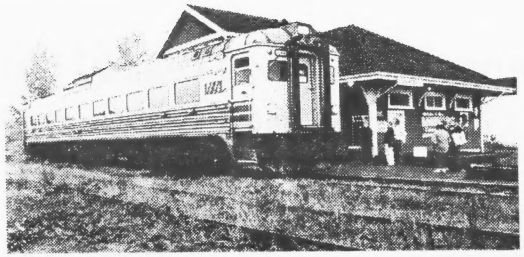
Sunday, October 20, 2002.

Dawn finds me aboard a BC Ferry, the first of the day from the mainland ferry terminal at Twawassen to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island. I'm planning an afternoon ride on VIA Rail Canada's passenger service between Victoria and Courtenay. VIA trains 198/199 were formerly named the Malahat Dayliner, though they officially lost that name in recent VIA timetables. Sunday is the only day of the week when this ride is possible; the train leaves at 8am the other six days, too early to leave from the mainland and reach the station before train time.

I literally eat my way across the waters of the Straits of Georgia. After two days with nothing but the skimpy offerings of the downgraded BC Rail meal service (the only thing remotely warm on the "hot lunch" during the bustituted Prince George-Lillooet segment was a bowl of soup), I wanted a big, hearty breakfast. The ferry "Spirit of British Columbia" has a buffet restaurant on Deck 5, at the stern, which satisfied that desire at a reasonable cost of under $10 Canadian, $7 US.

Victoria's train station is sandwiched between a busy street and the tracks; it is a tiny, narrow building at the east end of the Johnson Street Bridge in downtown Victoria. The sign on a brick parapet proclaims it as the VIA/E&N station; Vancouver Island's railroad, and though it has passed from being a division of the Canadian Pacific Railway to a part of US-owned RailAmerica's shortline empire, is still known locally only as "The E&N."

Both CPR and VIA have tried several times to discontinue the Malahat Dayliner. But it is the failure of RailAmerica's freight business and their decision to close the entire railway, that now threaten the passenger train. In January, 2002, VIA and RailAmerica announced that the train was soon to make its final run, ending passenger service on Vancouver Island after 115 years on March 10, 2002. That date was pushed back to June, and then to July; and then, on July 8 came a joint announcement of an agreement that gave the VIA train an indefinite if shaky future, with RailAmerica hoping to keep the railway in operation by seeking more freight business.



Left: Courtenay is the end of the line for the Vancouver Island service. The station is also a meeting facility for a substance abuse rehab program.

Right: The station in Victoria BC is tiny, squeezed between a roadway and the railway.

VIA Rail Canada even sent a newly-rebuilt Budd RDC Car, the VIA 6148, to Vancouver Island. Alas, that car has proved unreliable, so the Budd Car running today is the older but still capable VIA 6133.

The 6133 creeps across the Johnson St. Bridge from the E&N shops in Esquimalt, twenty minutes before the 12 noon departure time. On a Sunday morning, the former warehouse district where the station is located is quiet. VIA Rail accounts for most of the activity; there is a good load waiting for the Budd Car, which is nearly half full when it whistles off for Nanaimo, Courtenay and stops enroute.

The arch-shaped armrests of the 6133's seats, matching those of BC Rail's BC-15 that I rode two days earlier, tells of its Canadian National Railways heritage. But the interior of the 6133 is in much better condition than that of its BC Rail sister. The mechanical work done on BC Rail's cars seems to have helped dampen sounds from the engines mounted under the floor, for the VIA 6133 is audibly noisier inside.

Trackage on the E&N doesn't get either the traffic or the maintenance of BC Rail's main line. Once the railway is clear of the burgeoning suburban districts spreading outward from the Victoria area, weeds grow between the rails, and in places, branches of trees in the nearby forest brush against the windows of the Budd Car. The pace is leisurely; one could drive the distances covered by the train in less than half the time, which hurts potential ridership among local residents. Indeed, Sunday is the day when the train is best-patronized northbound, due to its midday departure which allows weekend overnight visitors from outlying towns to return from Victoria on a convenient afternoon schedule.

Mealtime on the Malahat Dayliner has always been a do-it-yourself affair; there is no food service on this Budd Car, and the food vending truck at the Nanaimo station sometimes misses the Sunday trips. The roundtrip to Courtenay is scheduled at over nine hours; so, on my walk from the downtown Victoria bus-/ferry terminus to the VIA station, I stopped at the Bun Shop on Courtney St. and stocked up on sausage rolls, a giant pork bun, potato chips and sodas. I'll have more to eat in one large paper sack than I did on the "all meals included" Cariboo Prospector.

A special stop is made, about 25 miles out of Victoria, to allow passengers to see the monument marking the location where construction of the E&N was completed, and a gold spike driven to mark the occasion. At several other points along the way, our young conductor points out locations of scenic and historic interest. He also advises day-tripping passengers of things to do while laying over at their turnaround point. His favorite is Qualicum Beach, one of the stations where the shore is within walking distance, and there are shops and restaurants to visit. I'm still going to Courtenay, because on my prior trips on the Malahat Dayliner years ago, the train only ran to Parkesville due to a bridge outage; but he advises that there isn't time to wander into town from that station while the train is prepared for its return, even though it is only two or three blocks away.

We get a new crew at Nanaimo. The operational headquarters of the E&N has always been here, as is Wellcox Yard, its main freight facility, and the connection to the mainland via CPR ferry to Vancouver. The food vending truck does show up, doing a pretty fair business with train passengers. Inside the station, which was repaired recently after a fire, the waiting room is clean and tidy and

cheerily decorated with paintings, though there is no agent here to sell tickets.

Beyond the Nanaimo station, the rail line parallels the main highway out of town and encounters several grade crossings. When planning to shut down the railway entirely, RailAmerica must have disconnected the crossing gates; for although bells ring and red lights flash, the gates do not lower. The Budd Car stops at each grade crossing to assure that no vehicles will be endangered, before entering the crossing. Another point of interest in Nanaimo: a shut-down Wal-Mart store, its former name still visible in encrusted dirt on the front of the empty building.

The new crew isn't as talkative as the one we had out of Victoria. In fact, the conductor spends little time in the passenger cabin. He opens the doors at station stops and then retreats to the cab with the engineer. We are left to ourselves, to pick out what we can see through the forest. At times, trees are all we can see; occasionally we can glimpse a stream or a town. At Parkesville I spot the Port Alberni Branch, once the source of most E&N freight business, but now closed down.

The E&N runs close to the shoreline of the Straits of Georgia at Buckley Bay, its station stop there only a couple of blocks from a BC Ferry pier. Then it runs inland again, to the end of the line at Courtenay. We arrive 37 minutes late, despite having no other traffic on the railway to contend with, and no serious delays due to slow orders. I later learn that the schedule, as published, is simply impossible to maintain under the current E&N speed limits.

The crew changes ends on the double-ended Budd Car at Courtenay; there is no place to turn equipment around. There's time to inspect the station building, which is in fine condition. The former agent's office is in use as a meeting facility for a local substance abuse treatment organization. As in Nanaimo, the waiting room and rest rooms are clean and well maintained. Though VIA says that a food service truck meets the train at Courtenay, on this Sunday it doesn't. My sausage rolls will have to do for dinner tonight.

During the layover, we don't make up more than a very few minutes of what time we lost into Courtenay, and lose a bit more time on the return trip to the south. At Qualicum Beach, where quite a number of daytrippers detrained, it is dark by the time the train arrives and they re-board. Even with them back aboard, the passenger load is much lighter on the way back to Victoria.

Two of them sit opposite me. They turn out to be rail advocates from Toronto, with whom I've had Internet discussions, without ever before meeting in person. They're going to North Vancouver in a couple of days to take a ride on BC Rail. During a discussion on the plight of the Cariboo Prospector, we are suddenly interrupted just before the stop at Nanaimo by the impact of a rock, thrown by an unseen vandal alongside the tracks. It shatters the outer pane of the window on the right side of the train, behind me; and cracks the inner pane.

The conductor is nowhere to be found, and we finally locate him by barging into the engineer's cab. By then, it's too late to radio for police assistance. Luckily

(continued on page 24)

New Route Miles in Eastern Canada

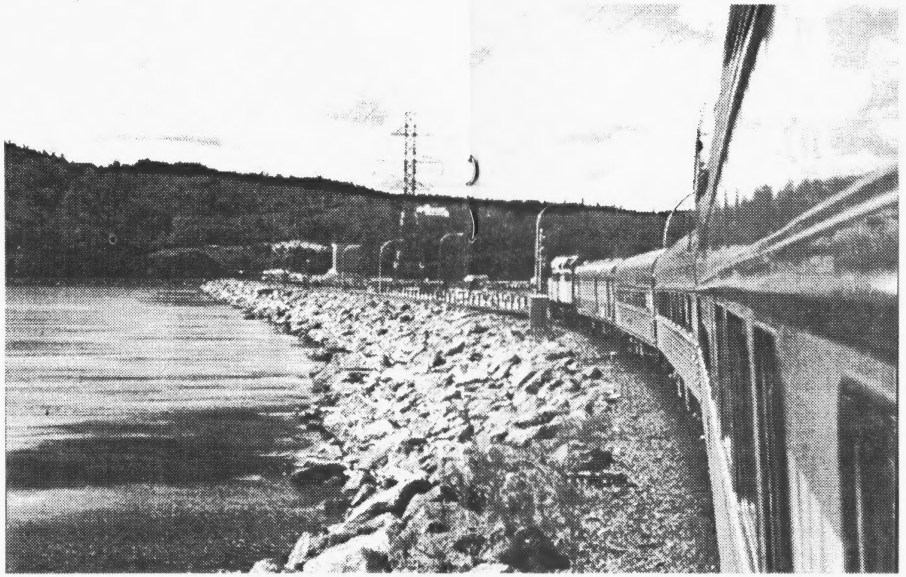
By Miles Post

On Aug 24, 2002 I embarked on a two-week vacation that allowed me to log some new rail miles involving Amtrak's new *Downeaster* between Boston and Portland, ME; VIA Rail Canada's *Bras d'Or* cruise train in Nova Scotia and a ride on the remote Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railroad.

By taking advantage of a Southwest Airlines "Rapid Rewards" freebie ticket, I flew from California to Rhode Island on flight 251 ONT-LAS-BWI (N772SW), connecting to flight 2109 BWI-PVD (N376SW). Upon arrival at Providence's Theodore Francis Green Airport, my original plan was to taxi to the Amtrak station for a quick jaunt up to Boston. However, on the plane I befriended a seatmate who happens to live about eight miles from me, and he offered a ride into Boston.

My intended destination was Boston's Logan Airport to rendezvous with a friend who would be joining me for a portion of this trip. After being dropped off at the MBTA's "Broadway" subway station, I negotiated my way to Logan Airport by using the Red, Orange and Blue lines, transferring at the "Downtown Crossing" and "State" stations. At Logan, I met my friend Candy near the baggage claim area and learned of her experience with "the Friendly Skies"(tm). Her flight from SFO encountered a three-hour delay, a mechanical problem and a change-of-aircraft. She's a flight attendant, so she's probably used to events like that, but, in this case, the experience wasn't part of earning a paycheck! Comparatively, I guess my journey was uneventful. After some drinks at the Hyatt Edgewater's lounge and a late dinner at "Assagio's" in Little Italy, we returned to the hotel for some well-deserved rest.

The next morning we taxied our way to Boston's North Station. I was truly amazed that our cab driver not only wasn't wearing a turban, but appeared to be born-in-the-USA! How often does THAT happen in this day and age in a large metropolitan city? Our intended goal was to catch Amtrak Train 683, the northbound noon departure of the *Downeaster* to Portland, ME.



VIA Rail Canada's *Bras d'Or* crosses the Canso Causeway linking Cape Breton Island with mainland Nova Scotia on Aug 28, 2002. Photos by the author.

I noticed that Amtrak has a subdued presence at North Station -- only a small ticket window with the word "Downeaster" displayed above. I couldn't find Amtrak's new "three-sheets-to-the-wind" logo anywhere. MBTA purple reined supreme, and the station has a "no-nonsense" approach of being functional primarily for commuter trains. No "Metropolitan Lounges" here.

Our train consisted of Genesis engine 808; Business Class car 82511; three Metroliner service coaches (44926, 44980, 44916), food service car 48143 and "cabbage car" 90213. This would be Candy's first experience with Amtrak, and I wanted it to be a pleasant one. Mission: IMPOSSIBLE? It didn't take me very long to realize that there was a very large group of passengers boarding our five-car train and a train crew who wanted to wedge everyone like sardines into three cars. They were supposedly saving the other two cars for "downline passengers", but I couldn't help but wonder if the "true" reason for compacting everyone into three cars was to make things easier FOR THEM. After all, they wouldn't have to walk as far when collecting tickets and they wouldn't have to open as many vestibule doors.

After failing to find two seats together facing forward, I tracked down the assistant conductor and suggested they open up one of the closed-off cars. He announced that this was a decision he couldn't make without first consulting with his superior, the conductor. The conductor was about eight car lengths away near the waiting room. I said "Why don't you radio him and ask him if you can open up another car?" He responded with "This is North Station. I can't discuss such trivial matters over the railroad operations frequency!" ... or words to that effect. So I said, "Okay. Let's go ask him in person." So we walked all that distance and asked the conductor. He had no problem with my suggestion and the car was finally opened up. Better still, he later advised us that the PA wasn't working in that car. Maybe THAT'S why they didn't want to use it. As for me, I enjoyed the absence of the PA announcements. Save for about five other passengers, Candy and I had the car all to ourselves, and it was a very pleasant atmosphere. Most of the passengers who were wedged into the other cars like sardines remained there. Go figure.

Candy told me that, on an earlier visit to Boston, she rode an MBTA commuter train to Salem, MA. That's on the Rockport Branch. I haven't ridden that line yet. OH NO! She has mileage that I don't have! AHHHHH! We're going to have to correct that situation --- and soon!

As Jack Turner described in a recent RTN article, the routing for our northbound *Downeaster* was MBTA's Lowell line as it exited Boston and then the 2.99-mile Wilmington Junction Branch, nicknamed the "Wildcat", to transition over to MBTA's Haverhill/Reading Line. Since I'd previously ridden the Lowell and Haverhill/Reading Lines, my "new mileage odometer" was on while we were on the "Wildcat" connector and, of course, after we departed Haverhill. It was a pleasant trip. The track quality was good, as I guess it SHOULD be, what with all the debate about the size of the rail and other "nit-picking" issues advanced by Guilford Rail Systems. I told Candy the story of how the inauguration of this train was tied up in litigation for some fifteen years (or more?), and she just shook her head in disbelief.

We made a brief stop at the "new" Old Orchard Beach station, one of the few locations where we were right on the coast line. Upon arrival in Portland, we used a small portion of the former Maine Central's Mountain Division to gain access to the new Sewall Street Station. There are no luggage lockers at the station, another spillover effect of September 11th. Since we were leaving later that evening on the overnight ferry to Nova Scotia, we taxied our way to the ferry terminal and, after a thorough inspection, handed off our luggage to be held in a staging area for later reclamation.

After having a late lunch and browsing around the restaurants and shops of old Portland along Commercial Street, we boarded the "SCOTIA PRINCE" (1) later that evening for an overnight cruise to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. This ship is huge and is used in the winter months on cruises in the Caribbean and Mexico. The passengers were a mix of people who, like us, were using it as transportation to Canada, and others who remained on

board for the round trip, using the ship as a vacation destination in and of itself.

Gambling is offered on board. Need I say more? Our stateroom was in the deepest bowels of the ship, even below the deck where the automobiles, buses and trucks were stowed, and a little too close to the ship's engines. Weird vibrations and mysterious banging noises were heard all night, and a bad thermostat resulted in a hot room. Oh well.

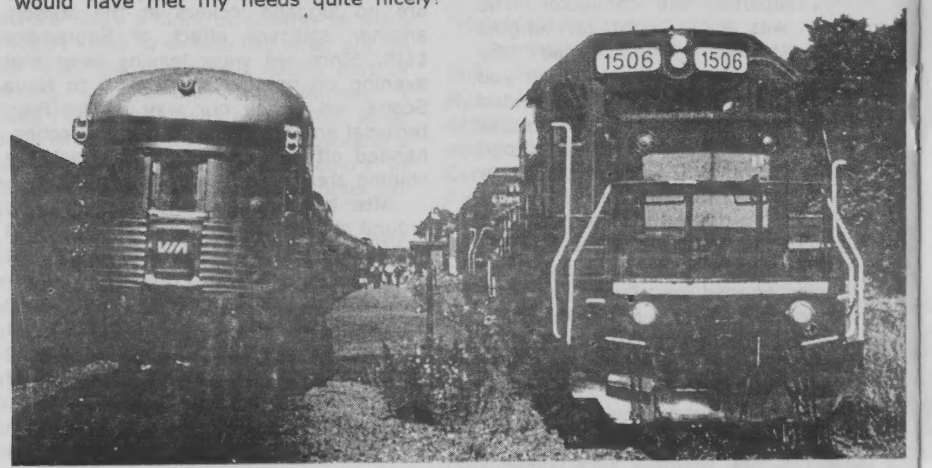
Next morning we met a retired couple who had just bicycled from Seattle to Boston and were now continuing their adventure in Nova Scotia! At Yarmouth, the Canadian Customs officer was curious as to why I would be staying in Canada longer than my traveling companion. That was easily explained. Candy had some time constraints and schedule conflicts and I had to stay in Canada long enough to ride the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railroad!

I'm kicking myself that we didn't make this trip about twelve years earlier. The VIA RDC Budd car that ran over the old Dominion & Atlantic *Evangeline* route from Yarmouth to Halifax was a victim of the January 15, 1990 "bloodbath," when many secondary trains met their doom. The tracks were torn up almost as soon as the last run made it to Halifax. If I'd made this trip even earlier, say, in the 1960s, I would have had a choice of TWO rail routes linking Yarmouth with Halifax. Canadian National Mixed Train # 244 would have met my needs quite nicely! Instead, today's "progress" would be represented in the form of an eight-passenger highway van operated by Campbell's Shuttle Service. YUCK!

Besides the two of us, there were four other local passengers. As characteristics of our jobs, Candy and I log a little too much time in these types of vehicles, so we were wondering when the fun was going to begin. If I had to do it again, I would've rented a car at Yarmouth.

We followed what was left of the Canadian National's Yarmouth and Chester Subdivisions, long since ripped up. The Yarmouth Sub ran from Yarmouth to Liverpool and was abandoned in 1983. The Chester Sub ran from Liverpool to Southwestern Jct., near Halifax, most of it being abandoned in 1991. Officially, mixed trains M243 and M244 were discontinued in the fall of 1969, but crews were known to take riders as late as 1975, that is, until CN management learned of the practice through a mention of it in the Jan 1976 issue of TRAINS magazine. Naturally, THAT brought a stop to it all!

Interestingly, Yarmouth was served by both CN and DAR (CP), with the two railroads coming into town from opposite sides but not physically connecting with each other. Columbia, MO was like that, too. The N&W (Wabash) came in from the north and the M-K-T came in on the south side of town, never physically connecting or interchanging traffic. Are there any other examples of this?



VIA's *Bras d'Or* and ex-Conrail leased engines for CBNS at Port Hawkesbury NS on Aug 28.

Above: The on-board service crew of the *Bras d'Or* pose at Halifax NS. The author's travel companion, Candy, is at the far right.

Below: At Orangedale NS, the author and his friend pose in front of the depot/railroad museum while the *Bras d'Or* (seen at left) makes its brief stop there.

Our van made a rest stop at a Tim Horton's doughnut shop in Liverpool, where I noticed the CN depot had been converted into a museum. After a long day, we finally made it to Halifax and checked in at the Delta Barrington Hotel, in the heart of downtown.

Tuesday, August 27 found us renting a Ford Explorer in Halifax that we would be driving to Sydney. I had reserved a compact car, but they didn't have one to rent, so we got a free upgrade to the SUV. No complaints here. It was pleasant making our way to and across Cape Breton Island, checking out different scenery than what we would see coming back on the VIA train the next day. I took some pictures of a Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia (CBNS) unit ballast train near the Canso Causeway, but it had nothing more than leased motive power. Nothing was lettered for CBNS. The MLW / Alcos are gone.

After a late dinner in Sydney, we grabbed some rest at the Cambridge Suites Hotel, just up the road from where VIA's *Bras d'Or* would depart the next morning. As part of an agreement with VIA, the car rental company didn't assess a one-way drop-off charge and allowed us to leave the SUV in the hotel parking lot.

Wednesday brought the fourth consecutive morning of getting up before the rooster crows. Candy and I were beginning to wonder if we'd need a vacation to recover from our vacation!

After our taxi delivered us at the VIA station, I concluded that the daily-and-since-discontinued VIA trains comprised of Budd RDC cars (another victim of the 1990 "bloodbath") must have gone a little deeper into the city of Sydney. Today's once-per-week westbound departure of train #619, the *Bras d'Or* (2) consisted of F-40PH-2 6432; baggage 8623 (ex-UP 5905); coach 8130 (ex-ACL 224); coach 8119; Skyline dome 8503, and sleeper buffet-dome lounge observation 8704 "Evangeline Park." The last three cars were from the original 1954 car order placed by CP for the *Canadian*. Those cars still look sharp after 47 years.

There were enough passengers to fill perhaps one and one-half coaches. Candy and I noticed that we appeared to be the youngest passengers aboard, and we're not exactly "spring chickens"! Meals were served at our seats, and the food was actually quite good. My traveling companion was drawing some comparisons between our meal service and how the airlines handle it. The service carts used by VIA are the same as those used on planes. Our car attendant appeared to be having some trouble maneuvering it down the aisle, let alone getting it through the vestiblule to the next car. The meals looked as if they were prepared by an airline catering company. They probably were.

I made a point for us to ride this train, as rumor had it that 2002 will probably be its last year of operation. As you read this, the train will probably have made its last run. CBNS assumed operation of this line from CN on Oct 1, 1993, but now wants to abandon everything east of Port Hawkesbury. At the east end, Devco is still operating, and became the Sydney Coal Company in Feb 2002. Their operation is much reduced due to the closure of the coal mines. They still roster eight GP38-2 units, but only operate 4-5

at any time, hauling coal from the port to a power plant. In addition to the coal mine closures, the large steel mill at Sydney has been closed and razed. This area appears to be Canada's "Rust Belt." If CBNS abandons the east end of their line, the Devco operation will be an isolated operation. Much of the downturn in traffic over this route was caused by the abandonment of the rail-ferry operation at North Sydney. When rail operations ceased on the Island of Newfoundland, the line we were riding today lost an important revenue source in the form of "bridge traffic." Similar to the plight of the passenger train in the 1960s, when one rail line is abandoned, it often adversely affects others.

While the scenery was nothing short of spectacular on CBNS' Sydney and Hopewell Subdivisions, the track was not in the best of shape and, unfortunately, ridership on the *Bras d'Or* has never set any earth-shattering records. What a shame. Great scenery and 1955 Budd stainless steel dome cars are a WONDERFUL combination! The trip reminded me of one of Clark Johnson's HIGH IRON TRAVEL "Explorer" trips. (3) The relaxed schedule allowed us to make special stops for pictures at Iona and to investigate the station-turned-into-railroad-museum at Orangedale. We also made the usual stop at Port Hawkesbury.

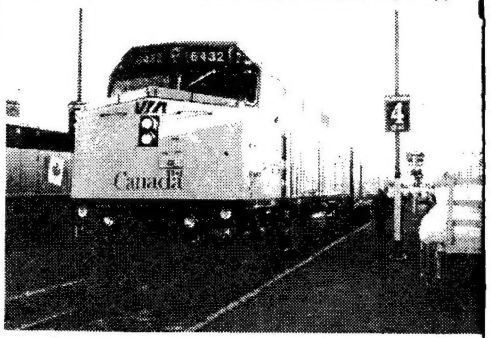
At Port Hastings we returned to the mainland by crossing the Canso Causeway. Before its completion in 1954, trains had to be loaded onto a fleet of ice-breaking ferries for the two-mile trip between Point Tupper and Mulgrave, then reassembled on the opposite shore, an operation taking an hour or more. The stormy waters of the Strait of Canso made this one of the few places in Canada where train passengers could (and did) get seasick. Construction of the 4500-foot causeway greatly simplified the trip. Ten million tons of rock were blasted from nearby Cape Porcupine and dumped into the strait, which is more than 200 feet deep midstream, forming an 800-foot-wide base and a surface that accommodates a two-lane highway, the rail line and a pedestrian walkway.

At New Glasgow our train wound its way through the old part of town on a narrow right-of-way, reminding me of AT&SF's Pasadena Subdivision in South Pasadena and Highland Park.

I kept promising Candy that our snail-like pace would markedly improve as soon as we transitioned to CN's Bedford Subdivision at Truro. As it turned out, numerous slow orders due to track work, and a meet with a westbound container train at Milford changed all that. Thanks to the 360-degree viewing in the dome, she was able to see what well-coordinated meets by opposing trains in CTC territory are all about. It works well as long as everyone obeys the signal indications.

She was aware of an incident at Atwood, CA on April 23, 2002 involving a Metrolink commuter train and a BNSF freight where that was not the case. There were some local railfans in the dome who pointed out the location at Stewiacke where a teenaged boy tampered with a switch and derailed the westbound *Ocean* on April 12, 2001 (4).

While making for interesting conversation, this didn't necessarily offer assurance to my traveling companion of the safety of rail travel! Since this was her first exposure to VIA and Canadian passenger trains, she also noticed the "Passengers will please refrain..." notices posted in the restrooms. She was at once amazed and repulsed when I explained that the toilets in the VIA cars still dump directly onto the track --- a system that's as reliable as gravity. I think we've all experienced the fragrance of walking through a Superliner car with a retention tank that needs to be emptied. She said, "But what about when people walk along the railroad tracks? That's so gross." I said, "People shouldn't be walking along railroad tracks in the first place. What better incentive to stay away?" There were a lot more passenger trains in, say,



VIA's *Bras d'Or* at the bumper post at Halifax NS after its run from Sydney NS, on Aug 28.

the 1940s "leaving their mark" along the right-of-way than there are today, but no one got their feathers ruffled over it back then. Why is it such a big issue now?

While the train was running alongside the west shore of Bedford Basin, I remembered seeing a map at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (5) the previous day that illustrated shipwrecks and their ladings that have accumulated at the bottom of the basin. According to the map, somewhere on the bottom of Bedford Basin are a bunch of Volvo automobiles. I'd like to know more about THAT story.

Before long we were pulling up to the bumper post at the station in Halifax. It was great trip, with spectacular scenery, a friendly crew, good food and drink, good company, good conversation, ex-CP equipment, direct-dump toilets and a "Park" car thrown in just for good measure. What could be more "Canadian" than that?

The following day, August 29th, I said goodbye to Candy and would continue my Canadian adventure with a ride on four ferries and the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railroad.

(To be concluded next issue.)

Footnotes--Links:

(1) http://scotiaprince.com

(2) http://www.viarail.ca/trains/en_trai_atla_hasy.html

(2) http://www.photosbystevenjbrown.com/via/brasdor/brasdor.html

(2) http://www.billwood.com/trains/brasdor/

(3) http://www.highirontravel.com

(4) http://www.trainscan.com/news/scan/s0105/#STEWIACKE

(5) http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mma/

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

Amtrak surprised rail travelers with a Jan 7 announcement that showed that the railroad under new President Gunn could initiate a sound business strategy that normal businesses use to increase income. It was the first time in memory that Amtrak had reduced fares to stimulate patronage. In the past, Amtrak acted more like a government agency (Postal Service, take note) in simply raising prices when it needed more income. Below is the full release:

Amtrak today announced that it is making rail travel a better value than ever before with a rollback in coach fares on many of its routes from coast-to-coast. These new fares, which are available beginning today, are up to 25 percent less than previous fares. Also today, Amtrak is launching its Winter Promotion. For a limited time, fares to many of Amtrak's most popular destinations are an even better value. With Amtrak's Winter Promotion, companions travel for free and a 25 percent discount is available for those traveling solo. This promotion may be combined with Amtrak's new fare rollback, making travel this winter on Amtrak a must.

"With this rollback in fares, we hope to not only stimulate interest in rail travel, but also to provide a draw for the travel industry as a whole," said Barbara J. Richardson, Amtrak's vice president of marketing and sales. "Combined with our Winter Promo-tion, passengers have another reason to take Amtrak, whether they are traveling for business or for pleasure."

The fare rollback is available for coach travel on most of Amtrak's long distance routes but does not apply to travel between cities in the Northeast Corridor. In addition, on some routes, fares for sleeping accommodations may also be discounted. The new fares are available online at www.amtrak.com, by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL or through a local travel agent. All fares are subject to availability.

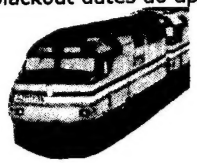
Amtrak's new fares are available on routes including: **East**: *Carolinian, Palmetto, Silver Meteor, Silver Star, Auto Train* (auto fees not discounted) **South**: *City of New Orleans, Crescent, Heartland Flyer, Sunset Limited, Texas Eagle* **Midwest**: *Ann Rutledge, Capitol Limited, Cardinal, International, Lake Shore Limited, Mules, Pennsylvanian, Pere Marquette, State House, Three Rivers* **West**: *California Zephyr, Coast Starlight, Empire Builder, Southwest Chief* .

Amtrak's Winter Promotion With Amtrak's Winter Promotion, when passengers purchase one ticket, they will receive

a companion's ticket for free. Passengers traveling solo will receive a 25 percent discount. Combined with the fare rollback, the Winter Promotion offers incredibly competitive fares for travel on many of Amtrak's routes. These great deals are available for sale January 7 through February 15, 2003 for travel January 10 through August 28, 2003. To take advantage of the Winter Promotion, passengers should log onto www.amtrak.com, call 1-800-USA-RAIL, or visit a local travel agent and mention code H255 for the free companion fare and code H259 for the discount for single travelers.

Families traveling together can enjoy even greater savings. On Amtrak, up to two children, ages 2 to 15 can accompany each fare-paying adult at 50 percent off. That means that for families, two adults may travel using the free companion offer with up to four children traveling at half price.

The Winter Promotion discounts are in addition to Amtrak's new everyday low fares but may not be combined with any other promotions and are not available on the *Downeaster, Metroliner,* and *Acela Express* services. Reservations are required at least three days prior to travel, and passengers using the free companion offer must travel together. Tickets may be upgraded to include sleeping accommodations upon payment of the applicable charges. Fares are non-refundable once purchased. The Winter Promotion is not valid on any departure requiring the purchase of a peak or unrestricted fare. Other restrictions and holiday blackout dates do apply.



As we go to press, rail advocates await action by Congress on an omnibus spending bill for the current fiscal year. On Jan 9 Senate Republicans completed a budget package that totals $385 billion and includes 11 appropriations bills, with many cuts. In transportation, it appears that the total of $21.2 billion was reached by cutting $400 million from budget requests. All of that $400 million is apparently out of Amtrak's request of $1.2 billion.

That means Amtrak would receive about $800 million. Amtrak President Gunn has stated that an appropriation of less than $1.2 billion would mean that the rail corporation would shut down.

NARP noted that it would likely be necessary for a floor amendment to bring Amtrak's funding up to its requested level. NARP added, "Another possibility—funding Amtrak with a last-minute emergency appropriation—would be even worse because it would maximize the time period during which the media would report doubts about Amtrak's short-term survival, and thus maximize damage to Amtrak's commercial revenues from this process."

Senate Appropriations Committee approval of the omnibus measure was expected about Jan 14.

In the meantime, Congress has been passing continuing resolutions to keep the government funded until final approval of the omnibus measure. The last continuing resolution takes Amtrak and other government programs up through Jan 31, with Amtrak being funded at an annual level of $1.04 billion.

●●●

Amtrak President Gunn wrote to Congressional appropriations leaders Dec 16: "I have rewritten our budget submitted by my predecessor, and it is focused on repairing equipment needed for revenue service and making investments in our infrastructure just to maintain current speed and operations. In doing so, I had to cut or defer nearly $200 million in activities and projects critical to this railroad just to get to the $1.2 billion level... The capital budget for [2003]..., tight as it is, will allow us to hold the existing system together and operate through the year without the threat of insolvency. During that period of time, you and your colleagues in Congress, as well as the Administration, will have the opportunity to debate a meaningful reauthorization bill and chart our future without the constant distraction of financial crisis.

"In May, I took over a railroad that had lost focus and engaged in financial games to make it look like the railroad was making progress toward self-sufficiency. As the DOT Inspector General and others have made clear, no progress was made toward self-sufficiency, and now the railroad is left in terrible shape—financially and physically. The problem can be fixed, but it will take funding and it will take time."

In the new Congress, there are some changes that affect Amtrak's chances of receiving adequate funding. In the Senate, the new chairman of the Commerce Committee is John McCain, who has stated his opposition to the Amtrak long-distance network. (The term "national network" is now being increasingly used instead of "long distance trains", as a term more acceptable to train haters.) On the same committee, McCain's chief helper is subcommittee chair Kay Bailey Hutchison, one of the most effective pro-Amtrak people in Congress. Also on this committee is Trent Lott, long pro-Amtrak. (Lott also is chair of the Aviation subcommittee.)

The Senate Appropriations Committee is chaired by Richard Shelby, who has voted pro-Amtrak.

In the House, leaders able to influence Amtrak legislation are almost the same as in the previous, 107th, Congress. Jack Quinn (Buffalo) chairs the Subcommittee on rail. He has been pro-Amtrak.

Don Young of Alaska chairs the House Transportation Committee; he has supported Amtrak legislation.

Appropriations leaders remain the same as before.

Some rail observers feel that these facts make Amtrak's situation not all that bad, while others worry a great deal. Probably the most worrisome is the fact that the Administration has called for an Amtrak funding level considerably lower than either house of Congress voted for recently.

The maglev project that the feds have been considering could fall by the wayside with present budget squeezes. The two finalists remaining under the Transportation Equity Act's contest for a maglev project to fund both feel that the proposed $950 million funding could evaporate in today's budget climate.

Amtrak planned to make schedule changes to the Chicago-Pittsburgh-NY route Jan 27, but that date has been postponed because negotiations with the Norfolk Southern were not completed in time. The plan is to have the eastbound *Pennsylvanian* lv Pittsburgh at 7:30am and make the *Three Rivers* departure later, at 10am from Pittsburgh. The latter would then lv Chicago at 10:30pm and reach NY at 8:15pm, an hour later.

Amtrak has begun selling tickets on the auction Web site, eBay.

Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) and 24 other Senators introduced the National Defense Rail Act (S.104) Jan 7, a re-introduction of a bill from last year (S.1991). It would have the feds invest $4.6 billion between 2004 and 2008 to "develop a world-class, national passenger rail system...essential to achieve a balanced US transportation system." There would also be a 2004 appropriation of $1.3 billion for security needs. It would make some reforms in Amtrak and would remove the 1997 self-sufficiency mandate. There would be funds for developing long and short Amtrak routes and high-speed rail corridors.

In Denver, the RTD on Dec 17 took a historic step at their board meeting with unanimous approval of their FasTracks vision—a comprehensive rapid transit network plan including an additional 110 miles of light and commuter rail and a significantly enhanced express, suburban to suburban, and feeder bus system. They made the point that the "vision" did not lock the RTD into a specific plan.—Jon Esty.

For the record, the NY transit strike was averted Dec 16 with a tentative contract agreement.

The Bush Administration plans to locate the new Homeland Security Dept in either Chantilly or Tysons Corner, both locations lacking rail transit service. NARP noted that this move would "increase the automobile-dependency of the national capital region."

TexARP is trying to obtain a passenger train between Ft. Worth and Denver, to be called the *Caprock Express*. Local officials are supportive of the move.

NEWS IN THIS ISSUE IS UPDATED THROUGH JANUARY 10, 2003.
Contributors to this issue not otherwise identified include Robert Abraham, Howard Bender, George Danchisen, Gene Poon, Ray Saunders, Barry Steinberg, Ed Von Nordeck and Walter Zullig.

The folks at Rail Travel News
wish you
fine train riding in the new year!

RAIL FANTRIPS

Mar 28-30: Nevada Rail Adventure: Reno Fun Train to Reno, ride revived Virginia & Truckee Rwy; Nevada RR Museum, more. $295 & up. NRHS, Central Coast Chapter, PO Box 8167, San Jose CA 95155. Arthur Lloyd, Co-tour chair.

Apr 4-6: Cherry Blossom Special to Washington DC. 29th ann. Visit. From Boston & other NEC points. $450 up. Mystic Valley Railway society, Inc., PO Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136-0009. $100 deposit; balance due by Feb 15.

Apr 21-27: Remote Canadian Rail Adventure Tour. Spec train, private diner, slprs & dome lounge obs lv Winnipeg 4/21 and travel remote lines in Manitoba, Ontario & Quebec. End in Toronto. $3795 up. NRHS, Central Coast Chapter, see address above

Jun 27-29 & Jul 3-6: Fair of the Iron Horse I or II, from Boston So Sta & NEC points to Baltimore. B&O RR Museum Ses -quicentennial of Steam Power. Mystic Valley Rwy Soc, Box 365486, Hyde Park MA 02136. www.mysticvalleyrs.org

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 or e-mail to rtn@trainweb.com.

CARS & CONSISTS

The *Texas Eagle consists given by Mr. J.A. Chenault Jr. in RTN 652 listed four more Superliners released after "periodic maintenance" from Beech Grove. They were Superliners 31036, 34075, 38016 and Superliner II 32085 "Kentucky", further reducing the out-of-service list of mine published in RTN 651 and still in keeping with my conclusions. Mr. Chenault's dates were all Tuesdays at St. Louis, including the extra coach and sleeper (train 421) for Los Angeles. He did not mention whether they were arrivals or departures. The Horizon car on the Nov 19 train, which he mentioned as possibly used for baggage, may have been a deadhead just to St. Louis, as they are normally assigned only to Chicago Midwest trains plus the *Three Rivers* and *Pennsylvanian*. That train had a coach/baggage #31036 in its consist. The times I rode that train we always had one or more Horizon cars left there. The consist did note the shortage of 33000-series lounges, with 35000 snack bar coaches substituting.

Chris Fussell has arranged the purchase of former Amtrak F40PHR engine #231 for restoration and exhibition in Portland OR. The engine was the first to be built from SDP40F components.—James Langan.

Nov 27, day before Thanksgiving: (all at Newark & NY Penn Stations)

***Acela Regional**, train 173: engine 935 (AEM-7); cars 44619, 44969, 21265, 82505, 82021, 82072, 82055, 44275 coaches, 85005 café-dinette, 81510 biz class.

***Holiday Extra,** train 1173 (BOS-WAS): engine 938 (AEM-7); cars 21662, 82056, 21182, 82043, 21066 coaches, 82082 & 82081 coaches with Atk logo, 48240 café-dinette, 81507 biz class.

***Metroliner**, train 123 (NYP-WAS): engine 923 (AEM-7); cars 44716, 44906 & 21979 biz cl coaches, 28303 lounge-dinette, 44970 & 44727 biz cl coaches, 20975 full first class coach.

***Vermonter,** train 55 (SAB-WAS): engine 663 (HHP-8); cars 48150 lounge-dinette (Atk logo), 82513 & 44694 coaches, 9640 & 9645 cab car coaches.

***Keystone Service** train 653 (NYP-HAR): engine 928 (AEM-7); cars 21056 & 21641 coaches, 7605 & 7609 coaches, 7617 "Ft. Edward" coach, 7623 coach, 7602 "Albany" coach, 7608 coach, 7606 "Schenectady" coach. (All 7600-series except 7608 also lettered "Adirondack".)

***Acela Express**, train 2167 (BOS-WAS): power car 2008, 1st Cl coach 3204, biz coaches 3509 & 3526, bistro 3308, biz coaches 3510 & 3400, power car 2005.

***Acela Regional**, train 189 (NYP-WAS): engine 910 (AEM-7); cars 21923, 82019 & 21908 coaches. 20046 café-dinette, 82022 & 20229 coaches.

***Clocker**, train 627 (NYP-PHL): engine 941 (AEM-7); cars 82045 & 20141 coaches, 20235 café-dinette, 25015 & 44234 coaches with Atk logo, 44658 & 21223 coaches.

***Clocker**, train 629 (NYP-WAS): engine 901 (AEM-7); cars 21653 & 82520 coaches, 20035 café-dinette, 82016, 21027 & 21153 coaches.

***Acela Regional**, train 193 (NYP-WAS): engine ??? (E-60); cars 28000 café-dinette (Atk logo), 43352 café-dinette, 21686 & 44215 coaches, 21701 coach (Atk logo) 44676 & 44188 coaches.

***Silver Meteor**, train 97 (NYP-MIA): engine 939 (AEM-7); cars 1516 express, 1716 mail-bag, 2506 "Pine Peak" dorm-lounge, sleepers 62026 "Ocean View", 62000 "American View" & 62027 "Orchard View", 8519 diner, 28016 lounge, coaches 25038, 25068, 25116 & 25006.

***Empire Service** train 267 (NYP-ALB): engine 716 (Genesis); cars 20222 biz-dinette, coaches 21165, 44602, 82510 & 21268.

***Acela Regional**, train 175 (BOS-WAS): engine 652 (HHP-8); cars 44673 coach, 20037 café-dinette, coaches 82088, 82004, 82090, 44693, 82086 & 82519, café-dinette 43002, biz cl 81506.

***Acela Express,** train 2112 (WAS-NYP): power car 2013, biz coaches 3407 & 3514, bistro 3313, biz coaches 3550 & 3515, 1st cl coach 3205, power car 2012.

***Holiday Extra** train 1175 (BOS-WAS): engine 653 (HHP-8); cars 44917 & 44799 coaches, 20053 café-dinette, 48149, 21918, 82009, 82067 & 82007 coaches, 48154 café-dinette, 44723 coach.

***Acela Regional**, train 187 (NYP-WAS): engine 932 (AEM-7); cars 82052, 44672 & 82509 coaches, 21102 coach lettered "Northeast Direct", 21164 & 82084 coaches, 43004 "Solana Beach" café-dinette, 81002 biz cl.—Dr. Michael B. Gehl.

***Sunset Limited**, train 2, Tallahassee FL Dec 30: engines 39 & 54 (P42s); cars 1004, 39021, 32091 "Minnesota", 32073 "California", 38043, 33029, 34096, 31519, Express Trak refrig car 74094. Train 22mins early (a record?).—Jack Turner.

***Coast Starlight**, train 14, L.A. Nov 10: engines California 2008 (F59, off at Oakland), 114 & 43 (P42s); cars 1760 baggage, 39009 transition dorm-sleeper, 32113 & 32117 slprs, 39973 Hi-level Pacific Parlour Car, 38059 diner, 33049 lounge, 34037, 34515 & 34114 coaches.—Eric Hillyer.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

The incident described in RTN 652 (p. 19) regarding the *Ann Rutledge* shoving a UP coal train over Kirkwood Hill brings to mind another such happening back in the early 1980s just west of Jefferson City MO and train 303, the westbound *Ann Rutledge*.

I was District Supervisor-Passenger Service stationed here in Topeka. I was escorting a group of about 65 members of MOKSRail to a statewide meeting at Jefferson City. The day and trip had been perfect until the train passed River Jct (milepost 128) and was going up the hill toward Centertown at milepost 140.2). River Jct is where most UP freight trains leave the Sedalia Subdivision and follow the River Subdivision to Neff Yard in Kansas City.

We began to get yellow signals and soon were stopped behind a red signal and just ahead sat a UP ballast train stalled on the hill, as one of the two GP7s had died and would not re-start. I located the conductor and asked the problem and asked what solutions were being considered. He replied, "We've notified the dispatcher and he's checking with Omaha and they're consulting with Amtrak at Washington" for disposition of the passengers. Options being considered:

1. Sit and wait for relief locomotive to arrive from nobody-knew-where, at an arrival time from the west that nobody knew.

2. Back our train up to River Jct and detour over the River Division and arrive in Kansas City well after midnight, three to four hours late, missing local stops.

3. Back our train up to Jefferson City and order buses to transport passengers, a delay that could be 4-5 hours, depending on availability of charter buses.

I then asked the conductor, "Why not just pull up behind the stalled train, couple up, connect the air, shut down the HEP on our locomotive (a brand-new F40PH with 3000hp when the HEP is not in use), and shove the train into the siding at Centertown?" His reply, "We can't do that." I asked why not. "We'd need permission from Washington and Omaha," was his reply. I said, "You have my permission and I report to Washington." He asked, "You'll take full responsibility if anything goes wrong?" to which I replied "yes." We had 3000hp on our engine and only four Amfleet cars, and the freight's geep had only 1600hp, so I knew it could be done with ease.

He agreed and within 30mins after the delay had begun, the whole operation was finished. We arrived in Kansas City 10 mins late and 200 passengers who detrained were not inconvenienced.

I heard later from the conductor that the engineer had told the dispatcher, "The dead engine had restarted and got as far as Centertown when it failed again and would not restart. Send us another engine before we go dead on the hog law." Omaha and Washington never knew how this problem was resolved because a low-level management person had taken charge and solved it for them, as should be the case.

John A. Mills
Topeka, Kansas.

Gene Poon's article on his last ride over the British Columbia Railway (RTN 652) reminds me of my one trip on that line. It was 1957. The railroad was called the Pacific Great Eastern, and its extensions from North Vancouver to Squamish and from Quesnel to Prince George and Fort St. John were under construction. There were no roads between North Vancouver and Squamish nor from Shallath to Lillooet, although the former was under construction. To bridge the gap Shallath to Lillooet, the PGE ran a train of flat cars three times a day to transport motorists and their automobiles.

My mother and I had booked on a rail tour of Western Canada, but had chosen to travel independently for the first portion, meeting the tour at Jasper. (The tour was going to visit places we had already seen and would not include the PGE nor the CNR all-steam line from Prince George to Jasper.) We had arrived in Vancouver from Oakland on SP #10, the *Shasta Daylight*, and NP overnight train from Portland to Seattle, and the afternoon GN *International*.

The next morning we duly presented ourselves at 1095 West Pender Street in Vancouver for bus transfer to North Vancouver. Upon arrival at that point we were confronted with a train of seven RDC cars led by an RDC-3 with reserved reclining seats and a full galley up forward. The PGE was providing shuttle service between North Vancouver and Squamish with a 5-car train several times a day, but on the days on which the through train ran, the first trip was combined with it.

The trip to Squamish was delightful on this July 17 morning. Upon arrival we discovered some of the vintage PGE regular equipment, including the former Interstate Public Service sleepers and some ex-Milwaukee lightweight coaches used to haul construction workers. At Squamish the five cars, mostly RDC-1s, were cut off leaving just our reserved-seat RDC-3 and an unreserved RDC-1 to go on to Prince George.

As soon as we left Squamish, our attendant provided coffee or tea and donuts—he had provided breakfast out of North Vancouver. About Lillooet, a good hot lunch was served. I had asked about possible "head end" privileges and was told that I could ride the front platform from Williams Lake to Quesnel. (It would be important to return to the passenger compartment, as dinner would be served upon departure from Quesnel.) I was allowed to ride in the cab area of the RDC-1 for photo purposes, which also let me listen in to the radio chatter. What I didn't know about the head-end riding was that I would be joined by three others.

There were three young women from San Francisco, two of whom were sisters and two were roommates. The two sisters had a half brother who was conductor on the Shallath-Lillooet auto train, and the three had been visiting him. When he saw them off this morning, he had given them a bottle of good Canadian rye whiskey. When we all gathered on the front platform of the RDC-3, they brought the whiskey with them. The engineer and head brakeman were both fresh over from the Ould Sod and of a mind to take a nip. The cab was equipped with a water cooler, the contents of which was used in conjunction with the whiskey. The result of this was, of course, three young men and three young women having a party on the front platform of the train!

Our Irish engineer managed to remain in complete control, and as we approached Quesnel, his skills were tested to the max. We were in radio contact with a southbound freight which we were supposed to meet. Our orders were to take the siding and let the freight go by. As we approached the south switch of the siding it was obvious that a local had deposited three cars just clear of the fouling point, giving us no room to go in.

We explained our plight to the engineer on the freight, who had heavy tonnage and did not want to stop his train under any circumstances. He had just reached the north yard limit board and had slowed down to a crawl. He suggested that we race to the north switch and back into the siding while he bided his time as slowly as he could go without stopping. Gunning the car as fast as it would accelerate, our engineer managed to pass over the switch with the freight about 200 yards down the line and its headlight beaming in on us. The conductor, riding the rear car, was in on the conversations, and hopped off the train before we even cleared the switch, threw it and called us to back down. We cleared the engine of the freight only by inches!

When I returned to my seat, my mother and those around her were all aghast, fearing the worst sort of collision had been imminent. I assured them that all was under control by radio. I still wonder about the consequences if we had not quite cleared, there had been a collision, and the six of us were found somewhat injured and with alcohol on our breaths!

Upon arrival, we were met by a Mercedes-Benz minibus and taken to our hotel. The next day I was able to photograph several steam freights, a mixed with an old 10-wheeler, a wooden coach and a colonist car before catching my own steam-powered train for Jasper.

Dudley Westler
Piedmont, California.

On an *Acela Express* Business Trip

By Walter E. Zullig, Jr.

A November 21, 2002 business trip to Washington, DC provided another opportunity to use Amtrak's *Acela Express* service for a round trip between Penn Station, New York City, and Washington.

Since I live north of the City, my trip started on the 6:30AM motor-coach connection from my condo to Croton-Harmon Station on Metro-North's Hudson Line, arriving there at 6:38. Most of the riders headed for the 6:47 Metro-North semi-express train to GCT that was loading on Track 4. However, I went down to Track 3 to await the arrival of Amtrak #240 which I would ride to NYP.

The Amtrak train was en route from Albany and pulled in 7 minutes late due to a slowdown at New Hamburg as a northbound Metro-North train thought it had struck a person or animal. Fortunately this had turned out to be a false alarm. We made good time running through the early morning fog and were thankful for the cab signals, as it would have been difficult for the engineer to see wayside signals through the "pea soup."

Our NYP arrival was 5mins down at 7:35. Acela Express #2109 soon was announced and a very large crowd was waiting to board. I was traveling with another person and we ended up in the head car, which also is the "Quiet Car", a designation that was rigidly enforced by the crew and fellow guests. Anyone using a cell phone or talking too loudly was asked to cease.

After Metropark I walked through the train and visited the Bistro car for an

AmMcmuffin and coffee. The train was indeed sold out with every seat occupied. A friend at Amtrak later told me that the trains rarely sell out except on foggy or "bad weather" days, when experienced travelers know there will be airport delays.

My "breakfast" was tasty and set me back $5. Throughout the train I overheard yuppies raving about the trains and the service. Two who boarded at BAL were discussing that they live there only because of the excellent train service; one of them said, "I love these trains—they make my life so easy." That type of talk is music to my ears.

Our WAS arrival was 1 minute late at 10:48 and WMATA's Red Line delivered us to Farragut North in ample time for our 11:30 appointment at a nearby office building.

Upon conclusion of the meeting we both headed for the Red Line. I rode only one stop to MetroCenter station, where I purchased my first Senior Citizen farecard from WMATA's sales office. Next I went for a short ride on the Red Line and saw Amtrak #30, the "Capitol Limited", passing on time just as I was boarding my return train at a station parallel to the CSX (former B&O) trackage.

The Metrorail train and the "Cap" leapfrogged each other until Union Station; the "Cap" had 2 Genesis locos, a few head end cars, several Superliner coaches and sleepers and a long string of mail/express cars on the rear. At Union Station I had lunch and visited some friends at Amtrak's offices.

The conversations went on until about 4:50, when I excused myself to catch the 5PM Acela, train 2112. A walk along the train indicated a very full load with no window seats so I again headed for the "Quiet" car where I took the single seat with a table at the front of the car. I assume it was empty because it "rides backwards" but that doesn't bother me as I do it all the time on commuter trains.

Amtrak takes some of the pressure off the 4 and 5PM *Acela* departures from WAS by operating Metroliners at 4:30 and 5:30, which, I am told, carry good loads.

Departure from Union Station came on time at 5PM. Although we moved at good speed, the train somehow lost 4 minutes to BAL where it departed at 5:38 (due 5:34). Between BAL and WIL I walked through the train to find it 90% full; during this little exercise period I also stopped in the Bistro car for a snack.

Upon returning to my car I noted that two passengers who boarded at WIL were in the midst of a loud conversation but were quickly asked to stop by the conductor. Arrival in PHL was at 6:42 (6:36) and we did some very slow running after departure from the City of Brotherly Love, so were set back another few minutes.

Arrival at the final destination, NYP, came only 5 minutes late at 7:48 (7:43) so the train legally was on time. The crew of this train was somewhat better than that of the southbound trip but many of these people could use a little more training in how to deal with the high-income people who ride the *Acelas*.

My car door stopped right opposite an escalator to the main level and I soon was in the IRT subway headed for Grand Central and Metro-North's 8:23 Poughkeepsie train that I would ride to Croton-Harmon. This is a new train, having been added only a few months ago to fill a service gap. To my surprise the 6-car train was quite full with only middle seats being available. Another example of "provide the service and they will come."

The arrival at Croton was on time at 9:13 and I was home via taxi about 10 minutes later, thus concluding still another rail trip.

A BC BC Adventure

By Gene Poon

Continued from page 11

nobody is hurt; the bits of glass having fallen onto an empty seat. "There goes the profit for the whole week," one passenger notes, sardonically.

The rest of the trip is subdued. The railfans from Toronto detrain at Duncan; from there on, the sparsely-occupied Budd Car settles into a quiet calm. I drift off to sleep, awakening as the train reaches the city lights of Esquimalt; pauses to drop off one passenger; and then creeps across the Johnson St. Bridge, returning to Victoria. At this late hour, the once-quiet warehouse district is bustling, its pubs, nightclubs and restaurants doing a good business. It's easy to find a taxi to my hotel. By tomorrow morning, I'll be back on a ferry to the mainland, and on my way home. My BC BC Adventure is over.

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